

# USDAnews

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

## Here's A Chance To Revise Your Life Insurance

*And Then Party On—  
In A Manner Of Speaking*

by Ron Hall  
Office of Communications

It's an anniversary party, sort of—but instead of cake and ice cream there's an information packet, and instead of music and party streamers there's the option of increasing your life insurance.

The 'anniversary party' is actually an 'open season,' designed to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program, or 'FEGLI.'

"The FEGLI Program began on August 29, 1954," noted **Carol Phillips**, USDA's benefits officer in the Office of Human Resources Management. "So, as part of the 50th anniversary of that program, the Office of Personnel Management is conducting an open season." That open enrollment, or 'open season,' takes place September 1-30, 2004.

"Unlike the Thrift Savings Plan or the Federal Employees' Health Benefits Program, FEGLI doesn't have an annual open season," she pointed out. "In fact, the last open enrollment for FEGLI was in 1999."

The open season is a time in which eligible federal employees can enroll in the program if they had previously waived coverage, or they can revise their presently

existing life insurance coverage.

Phillips added that virtually all current federal employees are eligible to participate in the open enrollment, except those who are excluded from FEGLI coverage by law or regulation.

"And," she underscored, "employees can elect coverage during this open season without having to prove insurability, or having a physical, or answering any questions about their health."

OHRM employee relations specialist **Marjorie Rawls** explained that FEGLI consists of "Basic" life insurance coverage plus three options. Basic life insurance coverage is determined by rounding an employee's gross annual salary up to the next thousand and then adding \$2,000 to it.

The federal government pays one-third of the cost of a federal employee's Basic life insurance.

Regarding the three options, the first is Option A, or Standard coverage. The second, Option B, is Additional coverage. The third, Option C, is Family coverage.

"In most cases," Rawls advised, "if you are a new federal employee, you're automatically covered by Basic life insurance—and your payroll office deducts premiums from your paycheck—unless you waive the coverage."

"And you must have Basic life insurance coverage in order to elect any of the three options."

Rawls said that federal employees are being provided, through their servicing personnel offices, packets—titled the "Open Season

*continued on pg. 7...*



"OK kids, let's see the 'food safety salute'—let's get those hands way up, palms forward! That's it, You're lookin' good, and this shows you've washed your hands—and you washed them the right way!" exhorts FSIS's **Tom Coolidge** (center, wearing hardhat)—also known as "Inspector Tom." He was on-site at an elementary school in Elgin, S.C.—in conjunction with a recent visit of the USDA Food Safety Mobile, which Coolidge is standing in front of. Note **Dianne Durant's** story on page 4.—**PHOTO BY TIM LEONARD**

## We're Providing Incentives To Promote Production Of Bioenergy, Using Ag Commodities From Mustard Seed, Safflower, Oats, Rice—Who Knew?!

by Ron Hall  
Office of Communications

"We're into our fourth year of the program, and it's been very successful at encouraging the production of renewable fuels," said **Steve Gill**. "We've seen substantial growth in the production, in this country, of both ethanol and biodiesel—so we feel that the program is meeting its objectives."

If Gill wanted to light up a 'victory cigar,' it wouldn't necessarily

be considered out of line—unless he tried it in a federal building, that is. But, cigar or not, Gill said he likes the track record of USDA's Bioenergy Program.

Gill is director of the Warehouse Inventory Division in the Farm Service Agency. In that capacity he oversees USDA's Bioenergy Program.

"Our program encourages commercial producers of 'bioenergy'—which translates into commercial fuel grade ethanol and biodiesel—to use agricultural commodities to increase production of those bioenergy fuels," he explained. "The tool we use is that USDA reimburses them for part of their costs of purchasing agricultural commodities that they'll use to produce bioenergy fuels."

"And increased bioenergy production, in turn, helps to strengthen...  
*continued on pg. 2...*



# Ann M. Veneman

## Secretary of Agriculture

**W**hen President **George W. Bush** came into office, he set a high bar for his Administration. He told me and every member of his Cabinet that he wanted government to be about results, not process. He wanted responsiveness, not bureaucracy, and service, not empty words.

He challenged us to live up to a vision of a government that understands that the American people are paying the bill. They are our customers, and they deserve the best possible customer service.

The President's Management Agenda is changing the way that government does business, ensuring that we are better stewards of taxpayer dollars and more accountable to the people we serve. We are making progress in this effort across government, especially here at USDA.

There are five management initiatives that we have tailored to USDA's unique needs and challenges. We call it "*USDA's Results Agenda*." The agenda includes financial management, strategic management of human capital, competitive sourcing, expanding eGovernment, and linking program budget decisions more closely with program performance. A new report to employees outlining our results is now available at [www.usda.gov/](http://www.usda.gov/) and I encourage everyone to take a few minutes to read it. It includes examples of results happening all across USDA.

Here are a few highlights:

**Financial Management:** In fiscal year 2002, USDA obtained the first clean financial audit in all of its 140-year history. We repeated this feat in FY 2003. A clean audit means we can account for the dollars entrusted to us. It also means we've improved debt management, which has resulted in more dollars available for USDA programs—thus benefiting employees as well as customers.

**Strategic Management of Human Capital:** New performance stan-

dards for SES and GS-14 and GS-15 managers are in place. New performance standards for about 60 percent of all employees will be established by January 2005. The revisions will help individual employees better understand the important contributions they make to the missions and goals of the Department and their agency.

**Competitive Sourcing:** By using this process some agencies have found their own in-house organizations are the most competitive. Natural Resources Conservation Service personnel recently completed a study of their National Cartography and Geospatial Center only to find that by using it, they'd save \$9 million over five years.

**Expanding eGovernment:** In January, we launched a new look and feel to our website. This was the result of thousands of hours of effort by hundreds of employees working to improve service delivery on-line at an acceptable cost. In March we added the Customer Statement for agricultural producers. The latest online tool will be 'MyUSDA.' Beginning in September, every customer and employee will be able to customize the information that appears when they log on. In addition, eAuthentication ensures that employees can conduct business in a secure online environment with a single user ID and password.

**Budget and Performance Integration:** This initiative provides a framework for agencies and employees to establish clear performance targets, track progress in achieving stated objectives, and make adjustments to improve results. It also provides a clearer link between dollars spent and outcomes, helping us justify budget requests.

USDA employees always have focused on results and always have strived to find new and better ways to serve the American public. The "*USDA's Results Agenda*" will ensure that critical programs are adequately supported and that employee direction, focus, and satisfaction are enhanced in the coming years. My thanks for a good job well done. ■

### Bioenergy...continued from pg. 1

en the income of soybean, corn, and other agricultural producers—while it lessens America's dependence on more traditional energy sources."

**Jim Goff**, the special programs manager in FSA's Warehouse Inventory Division, pointed out that the Bioenergy Program's track record speaks for itself.

"In fiscal year 2003," he noted, "ethanol producers expanded production by 607 million gallons, to a total of 2.69 billion gallons, and biodiesel producers expanded their production by 12.6 million gallons, to a total of 18.6 million gallons. And for the first two quarters of fiscal year 2004, ethanol production increased by 280.9 million gallons, while biodiesel production grew by 5.4 million gallons."

"I want to emphasize," Goff added, "that the producers of *all* those increases in production I just noted—for both FY 2003 and FY 2004—received reimbursements from our Bioenergy Program."

Goff said that the agricultural commodities which can be used in producing ethanol and/or biodiesel are numerous. They include barley, corn, grain sorghum, oats, rice, wheat,

soybeans, cotton seed, sunflower seed, canola, rapeseed, safflower, sesame seed, flaxseed, mustard seed, and switchgrass, plus animal fats, oils, and greases. "That pretty much runs the agricultural gamut," he observed.

**Connie Carrison**, a commodity program manager at FSA's Kansas City Commodity Office in Kansas City, Mo., said that the program began at USDA in FY 2001. It was subsequently included in Title IX of the 2002 Farm Bill.

"Since that time," she noted, "we've seen rapid growth—both in the production of ethanol and biodiesel and in the number of producers of those bioenergy fuels who are participating in our program."

Most recently, signup for the FY 2005 round of USDA's Bioenergy Program runs through the month of August. Goff explained that, under the FY 2005 round, USDA will make total program payments up to \$150 million to participating bioenergy producers who use agricultural commodities to increase production of ethanol and biodiesel between Oct. 1, 2004 and Sept. 30, 2005.

"Payments to individual producers are limited to no more than five percent of our total annual available funding," he clarified.

Gill affirmed that USDA's Bioenergy Program stimulates the industrial consumption of agricultural commodities by promoting their use in bioenergy production.

"We expect," he underscored, "that there will be even greater production levels of ethanol and biodiesel in FY 2005—and our USDA program is a key part of that effort." ■



Dressed in 1860s-era mourning clothes and captured in a daguerreotype-style black and white oval photo, NRCS's **Johanna Pate** places a wreath at the grave of a *CSS* Hunley crewmember. Note the story on page 7.—**PHOTO BY ANNE GELWICKS**

# Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

*Secretary Ann M. Veneman celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Food for Peace program in July and signed a memorandum of understanding with Mexico to improve the health and nutrition of Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals.*

*In August, World Trade Organization negotiators achieved a framework agreement on agriculture, thus jump-starting stalled trade talks, and the U.S. and Australia entered into a Free Trade Agreement. In addition, President George W. Bush directed USDA to sustain the environmental benefits of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Finally, employees here and in the field were consumed with aiding producers and consumers hurt by Hurricane Charley.*

**P.L. 480:** The Food for Peace program—also known as P.L. 480—was enacted in 1954 and initially used to assist countries experiencing emergencies with short-term food supplies. Over time “the emphasis shifted to the promotion of economic development and reduction of hunger and malnutrition abroad. Over the last 50 years our food aid and development assistance programs undoubtedly have saved millions of lives and helped many countries lift themselves out of poverty and dependence,” the Secretary said. Some of our primary commercial markets today are former food aid recipients including Japan, Western Europe, and South Korea. “The work that we do today follows in America’s long tradition as an outward-looking nation always willing to share our abundance to help others,” she said.

**U.S.-Mexico Memo Of Understanding:** Secretary Veneman and Mexico’s Secretary for Foreign Affairs, **Ernesto Luis Derbez Bautista**, have agreed to use the extensive network of

Mexican consulates within the United States to educate eligible populations about available nutrition assistance.

“USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service administers 15 different domestic nutrition assistance programs to help the most vulnerable populations meet their food needs,” Veneman said. “But many Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals working within the U.S. have limited awareness of eligibility for Food Stamps and other nutrition programs such as WIC and school meals. The objectives under this agreement include new partnerships, communications outreach in both English and Spanish, and other activities to educate eligible populations. The 45 Mexican consulates across the United States represent the largest network of consulates in this country, making them ideal partners in this effort.”

**World Trade Organization Trade Progress:** In August, trade negotiators agreed to work toward further opening markets and reducing trade barriers to exports and imports. “The development of this strong framework serves to re-energize the overall Doha Development Agenda negotiations that began in Doha, Qatar in 2001,” Veneman said.

It calls for significant improvement in market access; substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support; and, in an historic move, the complete elimination of export subsidies. The agreement also outlines a number of principles to guide the next stage of the negotiations, such as greater harmonization in tariffs and subsidies across countries; the shape of export credit disciplines; and rules to determine the level and structure of trade-distorting domestic support programs.

**U.S.-Australia Free Trade Pact:** Secretary Veneman represented USDA at the signing of the

U.S.-Australia Free Trade Pact on August 3. President Bush pointed out that the agreement immediately eliminates duties on 99 percent of all U.S. manufactured exports to Australia and 100 percent of all duties on farm product exports. “Today, American farmers export almost \$700 million worth of goods to Australia. And because of this agreement, that total will rise,” the President said.

**Conservation Reserve Program:** President Bush directed USDA to preserve the environmental benefits of the CRP by offering early reenrollments and contract extensions for acres that begin to expire in 2004. Otherwise, 16 million acres would be eligible for other uses in 2007 alone. In addition, the Secretary announced that a general CRP signup will run through September 24. Currently there are 34.8 million CRP acres but the 2002 Farm Bill authorized total CRP enrollment of 39.2 million acres. The President also announced two new programs for which signup begins October 1. The first would help restore the Northern Bobwhite Quail on 250,000 acres of grass buffers along agricultural field borders. The second emphasizes wetlands restoration allowing landowners to enroll large wetland complexes and playa lakes located outside the 100-year floodplain.

The CRP already has restored 1.8 million wetland and wetland buffer acres nationwide. In 2003, agriculture had a net gain in wetland acres from the previous year for the first time.

**Hurricane Charley:** USDA has pulled out all the stops to aid battered Floridians—from immediate-



Secretary **Ann M. Veneman** (center), flanked by Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services **J.B. Penn** (left) and Chief Economist **Keith Collins**, get ready for the start of a July 16 teleconference with farm broadcasters and reporters which included a focus on how USDA is helping to provide relief for farmers and ranchers affected by recent drought conditions. The activity took place in the Department’s recently renovated radio studio at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC.—**PHOTO BY ALISA HARRISON**

ly distributing 120 tons of food commodities, to replacing \$23.7 million in food stamp benefits to current recipients, to mobilizing a Forest Service incident command team to help organize and manage a mobilization center and base camp at Lakeland, Fla. Forest Service assistance includes shower units and meals for 500 people.

On August 23, Secretary Veneman toured the hardest hit agricultural areas. She announced the availability of \$5 million to purchase a 10-day supply of baby food and formula for 6,000 infants. That’s in addition to 480,000 bottles of ready-to-feed formula, 150,000 jars of baby food, and 7,000 boxes of rice cereal already provided. USDA also issued waivers to allow free school meals, regardless of eligibility, for 45 days after classes resume, and helped find shelter for residents of USDA-sponsored multi-family housing units that had been damaged. For the full report go to <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>

USDA statistics indicate that the region of Florida that lay in Hurricane Charley’s path accounts for about one-third of the state’s citrus industry, one-third of the nursery industry, and more than 60 percent of the cattle industry.

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

# Employees *make these things happen*

## Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

### This Walking Bread Slice Promotes Good Nutrition

What do a life-size mascot of a slice of whole wheat bread and an island-wide nutrition education program have in common? The answer is that they both have the same name—and USDA and others are making creative use of that name to promote good nutrition.

“PANECO” is the name of a new nutrition education program in Puerto Rico. In English it is called the “Action and Nutrition at Home Program”—and in Spanish it is called “El Programa de Acción y Nutrición en Casa.”

According to **Jaime Rivera**, director of the Food and Nutrition Service’s Caribbean Area Office, based in San Juan, Puerto Rico, this new nutrition education initiative involves FNS and Puerto Rico’s Department of the Family.

Rivera explained that in the 50 states FNS’s Food Stamp Program offers nutrition assistance to its clientele. But in Puerto Rico that assistance is provided by FNS’s Nutrition Assistance Program, or NAP.

“NAP” is better known in Spanish as ‘PAN’—which also translates into ‘bread’ in Spanish,” he said. “Some 1.3 million out of 3.9 million residents in Puerto Rico par-

ticipate in FNS’s NAP—so we were looking for a way to catch their attention in a fun way, in order to promote the program.”

“Last year the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico’s Department of the Family, which administers NAP, decided to bring its nutrition education program in-house, after years of contracting it out. It had to develop a new program from scratch, with one major hitch—the agency had no nutritionists on board.”

Enter **Aracelis López**, a nutritionist at FNS’s Caribbean Area Office. “The name ‘PANECO’ was her brainchild,” Rivera noted.”

So, what’s the deal with the slice of bread?

“I was asking myself what is it that could be identified by children and adults alike that would also be identified with representing nutrition education and healthy lifestyles,” López recounted. “So I took ‘PAN’ which also means ‘bread’ and added an ‘ECO’ to it to round it out. I envisioned this nutrition education effort as the ‘echo’ of the NAP,” she added. “NAP benefits provide participants with the means to purchase food, while nutrition education helps them to make healthy food choices.”

“The Department of the Family

worked with some graphic artists to come up with the specific image,” López explained. “Then they added a voice and nutrition messages.”

“PANECO” came to life in March, during National Nutrition Month, commemorated by USDA and the Department of the Family. Since then, he has been involved in several community impact activities, including events at local elementary schools, and he even has his own TV spots.

“He’s a big hit with kids and parents alike,” said López. “He is simply adorable, and his jingle makes everyone want to jump up and dance with him. Kids hug and kiss him.”

“And,” she added, “although he looks good enough to eat, he’s just a little too big for that.”

“What young ‘PANECO’ does not know is that he will soon have his hands full—when he takes on a much bigger role,” Rivera said. “He is about to become the centerpiece of a multimedia campaign that promotes good nutrition and physical activity within every FNS program in Puerto Rico,” he added. “My office is developing an integrated State-based Nutrition Action Plan with the Departments of

the Family, Agriculture, Education, and Health—the four state agencies that administer FNS programs on the island. The Nutrition Action Plan pools resources and develops strategies to teach people how to adopt healthier lifestyles.”

“In addition, we have established partnerships with the Department of Recreation and Sports, the College of Nutritionists and Dietitians, and several other organizations,” he explained.

“That’s significant,” Rivera pointed out, “because various FNS funded nutrition programs—at the federal, state, and local levels—will typically work on their own to promote their individual missions, and not necessarily link together in a common promotional effort. To my knowledge this is the first time this particular meshing of federal, state, and local nutrition promotion efforts has occurred.”

“It all boils down,” underscored FNS Administrator **Roberto Salazar**, “to encouraging everybody to work together to promote nutrition, a healthy diet, and better lifestyle behaviors.”

“I want to use what is going on in Puerto Rico as a model for our states.”

—**KIM JABAT**

## Food Safety

### Stories From The Road—With USDA’s Food Safety Mobile

When the USDA Food Safety Mobile comes to town, people notice. Covered with colorful graphics, the 35-foot long vehicle has been traveling America since it was launched in March 2003. Here’s a snapshot of typical events during its first 18 months.

The Mobile has made tracks. In 2003, it traveled through 28 states and covered 24,267 miles, distributing educational materials to an estimated 197,000 people. Operated by the Food Safety and Inspection Service’s Office of Public Affairs, Education, and Outreach, the Mobile has appeared at all kinds of gatherings: fairs, senior centers, parades, cook-offs, and grocery stores.

When the Mobile rolls into town, USDA em-

ployees throughout the country have been partnering with the Mobile educators and drawing on their local contacts to make things happen. With their help, people across the country are learning more about safe food handling.

When **Lisa Childers**, a Family & Consumer Science Agent with North Carolina Cooperative Extension in Lillington, N.C., first heard about the USDA Food Safety Mobile, she thought: “We are so rural. I just didn’t think they’d come here.”

But when Childers contacted the Mobile team, she found them ready to roll, including driver **Tim Leonard**. He is retired from FSIS—but, since the Mobile’s launch, he’s been the face of USDA on the road.

Childers purposefully selected a very rural school—an elementary school in Olivia, N.C. Its



“Now, who can tell me one of the food safety messages that **Thermy** and the other characters promote? Here’s a hint: they’re written right here on the side of the USDA Food Safety Mobile,” notes North Carolina Cooperative Extension agent **Lisa Childers** (center, wearing shades).

—**PHOTO BY TIM LEONARD**

# Editor's Roundup

*USDA's people in the news*



**E**d Knipling is the administrator of the Agricultural Research Service.

From December 2001 until his selection for this position Knipling served as acting administrator of ARS. He had been ARS's associate administrator since December 1997, following service as the agency's acting administrator from October 1996 to November 1997.

From 1982-96 Knipling worked for ARS in Beltsville Md., first as associate deputy administrator of the National Program Staff, then as director of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and finally as deputy administrator of the National Program Staff. He was area director for ARS in Fresno, Calif., from 1978-82 after having served as ARS's area director in Stoneville, Miss., from 1975-78. He began his career with the agency as a research plant physiologist in Gainesville, Fla., in 1968.

**Floyd Horn**, the previous administrator of ARS, retired from that position following over 32 years of service with ARS. ■



**B**ob Young is the assistant inspector general for audit in the Office of Inspector General.

From May 1995 until his selection for this position Young served as the deputy assistant inspector general for audit in OIG. He was the director of OIG's Administration and Finance Division in Washington, DC, from 1989-95, after having served as the assistant regional inspector general in OIG's Great Plains Region in Kansas City, Mo., from 1980-89.

From 1976-80 Young worked as the supervisor in charge of OIG's office in St. Louis, Mo. He began his career with OIG in 1970 as an auditor in its Northeast Region in [then] Hyattsville, Md.

**Dick Long**, OIG's previous assistant inspector general for audit, retired from that position following over 38 years of service, all with OIG at USDA. ■



**M**ark Woods is the assistant inspector general for investigations in the Office of In-

spector General.

Before joining USDA, from February 2002 until his selection for this position Woods served as the assistant inspector general for investigations in the Office of Inspector General at the U.S. Small Business Administration. He was the deputy assistant inspector general for investigations in OIG at the U.S. General Services Administration from 1999-2002.

Woods worked in OIG for GSA as a regional inspector general in San Francisco from 1995-99, as an assistant regional inspector general in Orange, Calif., from 1991-95, and as a special agent, first in Boston from 1985-89 and then in Washington, DC from 1989-91. He began his federal career as a special agent with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in Chicago in 1983, after having worked as a police officer in the suburbs of Chicago from 1978-83.

**Greg Seybold**, USDA's previous assistant inspector general for investigations in OIG, retired from that position following over 33 years of federal service. ■



**J**ose Acevedo is the deputy chief for programs in the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

From July 2000 until his selection for this position Acevedo served as the associate deputy chief for programs in NRCS. He worked as the strategic planner at the agency's Southeast Region in Atlanta from 1995-2000, after having served as NRCS's deputy state conservationist in South Carolina, based in Columbia, from 1989-95.

Acevedo worked in a number of positions for the agency in both Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands during the 1980s and 1970s, including serving as deputy director for its Caribbean Area, an environmental specialist, a district conservationist, and a soil conservationist. He began his career with the agency in 1972 as a soil conservation technician in Bayamon, Puerto Rico.

**Tom Weber**, the previous deputy chief for programs in NRCS, is now serving as the agency's associate chief until his planned retirement in September 2004. ■

450 students had "never had anyone or anything like this come to them before," she said.

Before the visit, Childers explained the program to the Harnett County School Board and lined up volunteers, including other extension agents, public health employees, and teachers.

She then met Leonard and rode with him, providing directions through 30 miles of winding rural roads to the school.

One by one, the different classes trooped out to the Mobile, gawking at the graphics and two huge costumed characters—one representing "BACI," the dangerous bacteria that can be found in food, and the other representing the trademarked "Thermy," the food thermometer.

"The Mobile was a big hit," she said.

The next day, back in her Extension Office, Childers fielded calls from kids and teachers throughout the county. They were calling, looking for information on food safety for class projects. "It was the talk of the town," Childers said.

At yet another stop, another USDA employee brings food safety education to town:

"All right kids! Let's see the 'food safety salute,'" shouted 'Inspector Tom,' shepherding scores of kids around the Mobile in Elgin, S.C.

'Inspector Tom's' real name is **Tom Coolidge**, an investigator with FSIS's Program Enforcement, Evaluation, and Review field office in Columbia, S.C. Investigation is one of his jobs; communicating about food safety is another.

So when Coolidge heard about the Food Safety Mobile, he jumped right in.

It was at one of the elementary schools that 'Inspector Tom' came to life. Coolidge was touring kids around the Mobile and showing them the characters that represent the key safe food-handling messages: clean, separate, cook, and chill.

"Then I noticed the 'inspector' character on the Mobile, so I got my hardhat and white inspection coat—'Inspector Tom' was born! I'd point to 'myself' and tell them it was me there on

the Mobile. The kids loved it! And it kept them engaged, kept them learning," Coolidge said.

"I even invented the 'food safety salute!' You know, you hold up your two hands palms forward in front of you. That shows you washed your hands and you washed them the right way. 'Clean' is one of the key safe food handling messages. So, I'd introduce myself with the food safety salute, or when I wanted to get their attention, I'd do the salute. And when they left, we gave each other the salute." Coolidge said.

When the Mobile rolled out of South Carolina, it had a little something it didn't have when it arrived: a long white coat and a hardhat. Coolidge passed them on to Mobile driver Tim Leonard. "Just in case he finds another 'Inspector Tom' on the food safety highway," Coolidge laughed.

Still another story from the road, with the USDA Food Safety Mobile—and the USDA people who help make it all happen.

—DIANNE DURANT



**B**illy Milton is the assistant administrator of the Office of Management in the Food Safety and

Inspection Service.

From February 2003 until his selection for this position Milton served as the acting associate deputy administrator of the Office of Management in FSIS. He was director of the agency's Labor and Employee Relations Division from June 2000 to February 2003.

Milton worked with labor organizations such as the American Federation of Government Employees for 15 years, from 1985-2000, where he represented federal sector employees as a national representative, deputy director of membership and organization, and director of representation and education. He began his federal career in 1976 as a U.S. customs inspector with the U.S. Customs Service in Boston.

**Ron Hicks**, the previous assis-

tant administrator of the Office of Management in FSIS, is now that agency's assistant administrator of the Office of Program Evaluation, Enforcement and Review. ■



**J**ohn Clifford is the deputy administrator for veterinary services—the nation's chief veterinary official—in

the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

From October 2001 until his selection for this position Clifford served as an associate deputy administrator for veterinary services in APHIS, responsible for national animal health policy and programs. He was the agency's assistant deputy administrator for veterinary services from 1997-2001.

Clifford served as APHIS's area veterinarian in charge for Ohio and West Virginia, based in Pickerington, Ohio, from 1993-97, after having been the area veterinarian in charge for Indiana, based in Indianapolis, during

1993, and the area veterinarian in charge for Michigan, based in Holt, Mich., from 1990-93. He began his career with APHIS as a field veterinary medical officer in Richmond, Ky., in 1985.

**Ron DeHaven**, the previous deputy administrator for veterinary services in APHIS, is now APHIS's administrator. ■



**A**нна Palmisano is the deputy administrator for competitive programs in the

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.

Before joining USDA, from July 1998 until her selection for this position Palmisano served as a program manager in environmental microbiology with the Office of Biological and Environmental Research at the U.S. Department of Energy in Germantown, Md. In that position she managed research programs for

DOE which concentrated on such subjects as global climate change, the use of natural organisms to clean up pollutants, and the use of genomics to study microorganisms in nature. She worked as a program manager in environmental microbiology at the Office of Naval Research in Arlington, Va., from 1992-98. From 1987-92 she worked as a staff microbiologist in the Environmental Safety Division at Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Since 1994 Palmisano has been chairing the Working Group on Biotechnology for the Environment within the federal government's U.S.-European Commission Biotechnology Task Force. From 1997-2004 she chaired the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Biotechnology within the federal government's National Science and Technology Council.

**Ted Wilson**, the previous deputy administrator for competitive programs in CSREES, retired from that position following 24 years of service with USDA. ■

## PROFILE PLUS *More About: Phyllis Fong*



**P**hyllis Fong, USDA's Inspector General, did not set out to become USDA's top cop. With an undergraduate degree in Asian studies from Pomona College in California and a law degree from Vanderbilt University in Tennessee, she intended to become an international lawyer specializing in trade and immigration.

Those interests began in her childhood. Fong's family emigrated from Hawaii to China in the mid-1800s, setting off her lifelong passion for Asian studies. Fong was born in Philadelphia but returned to her Hawaiian roots after her father finished school on the 'mainland.'

"I had a wonderful experience growing up. They call Hawaii a melting pot because of its multi-racial and multi-cultural society. I always felt that everyone there had the opportunity to become anything. It didn't matter what color, what sex, what race, what ethnic heritage you were, if you were interested in something you could pursue it," she said.

Still, Fong said she had no plan to become an Inspector General. "When I was growing up, I remember searching, as all kids do, for a career path that matched my talents. And my father said to me, at one point in high school, that he really thought law school would be right for me, that I would be a tremendous lawyer. I had never thought about that as an option. He was a doctor and yet he did not suggest I go into medical school. I think he was tired of my arguing with him about everything!"

Armed with her degrees, Fong came to Washington, DC and got a job with the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, which at the time was studying immigration policy. One thing led to another, and a colleague who was the Inspector General at the U.S. Small Business Administration asked her to become her special assistant.

"I realized this was a good opportunity. Who can be against going after fraud and abuse? Who can be against economy and efficiency in govern-

ment?" Fong has been in the IG community ever since, rising to IG of the SBA before coming to USDA in December 2002.

Fong oversees about 600 employees divided almost evenly between investigators and auditors. She cites the investigation into the single find of BSE announced last December as a showcase of auditors and investigators working together with USDA on sensitive matters.

"We initiated the investigation back in February because there were allegations that people had falsified records or misstated what they found. We did an audit in conjunction with that effort just to take a look at how the new BSE surveillance plan was being developed and implemented.

"There was real potential for that whole situation to become confrontational and unproductive. Fortunately the Secretary, APHIS, and FSIS all understood that we were there to assist the Department. Our whole purpose was to help USDA figure out how best to structure the BSE surveillance program at an early point so that when we get to the end of it there won't be any significant issues," she said.

Fong gives much credit to her staff. "The OIG audit and investigative staff here have a reputation government-wide as being top notch. My personal experience has borne that out; I rely on their expertise every single day."

**Last Book Read:** "I have two daughters, ages seven and four, and so literally the last book I read was *"Winnie the Pooh"* by A.A. Milne."

**Last Movie Seen:** *"Shrek 2"*

**Hobbies:** "In addition to watching the kids, I like to do needlepoint."

**Favorite Food:** Chocolate

**Favorite Weekend Breakfast:** "Making banana pancakes with my four-year-old."

**Priorities In The Months Ahead:** "To instill the message within USDA that OIG's mission is not just to audit and investigate. Our mission is to work in partnership with the Department to manage programs more effectively and deal with fraud and abuse."

—PATRICIA KLINTBERG



Persons who are members of historical societies often do their research in quiet obscurity—or, if they are participating in reenactments of historic events, their audiences might

know more about the latest winner on “American Idol” than about the historic event being commemorated.

But **Johanna Pate** recently participated in a historical activity that both received national news coverage and fueled speculation about a 140-year-old mystery.

Pate, a Natural Resources Conservation Service grazing lands specialist at the USDA Service Center in De Ridder, La., recently participated in a funeral service in Charleston, S.C., for the crew of the CSS Hunley, a Confederate submarine that was lost at sea in 1864.

“I’m very active in Civil War reenacting,” she explained. “I’m particularly interested in the roles of women during that time period. I study everything from what they wore to the foods they ate. I also do presentations on the mourning customs during the 1860s.”

In fact, Pate pointed out that the clothing she wore during the Hunley Crew memorial service was an 1860s-period mourning dress with black bonnet, black gloves, and black veil—and it was a correct reproduction. “We don’t wear ‘costumes,’” she emphasized. “Costumes usually have zippers, Velcro, and other more modern devices. Instead, we try to get the appearance exactly the way it was during the 1860s.”

**Herb Bourque**, NRCS state public affairs specialist at the agency’s state office in Alexandria, La., noted that the mission of the CSS Hunley was to break the blockade of Charleston harbor by the Union Army. “It became the first submarine to sink an opposing warship in battle—and that’s a feat that wouldn’t happen again for another 50 years, and in another war,” he said.

The 40-foot-long, 14-ton Hunley was a

crudely constructed vessel that had no independent air supply and that was powered by a hand crank. It carried a crew of eight. On the night of Feb. 17, 1864 it set out to engage the Union fleet blockading the Charleston harbor.

Outside the harbor the submerged sub rammed a torpedo into the hull of the USS Housatonic and sunk it. But then the Hunley sank also.

What’s the answer to the mystery of why it sank? Scientists have recently speculated that it wasn’t Union cannonfire but rather a sudden shift in weather patterns, with accompanying altered tides, which may have led to its demise. Nonetheless, for more than a century no trace of the sub or crew was ever found.

Then in 1995, using the latest in technological advancements, the sunken vessel was discovered—and, five years later, it was raised from the waters and brought to a conservation center in Charleston, where its interior was excavated and its contents studied.

The skeletons of all eight crewmembers were inside the vessel, along with many of their personal effects such as pocket watches and pipes. Project archaeologists were ultimately able to identify, with some degree of certainty, all eight skeletons by name.

Then, this past spring, the crew was buried in Magnolia Cemetery in Charleston, in a funeral ceremony which brought Confederate reenactors from throughout the South, thousands of spectators, and national news coverage.

Pate was part of the procession, which included over 9,000 participants, including uniformed men as well as women in period clothing, who marched in the five-mile funeral procession for the crewmembers. Specifically, she took annual leave to walk along one of the eight horse-drawn caissons which carried the eight wooden caskets. But her participation in the ceremony was unique.

“I’m the president of the Louisiana Society Order of Confederate Rose,” she explained. “When the Hunley Commission, which was responsible for the ceremony, asked our 14-state

Order to provide greetings and place a wreath, all of the states voted on who they wanted to represent them. I was the one selected.”

Accordingly, at the beginning of the funeral procession she was one of seven persons who gave remarks about the event. Then, following the procession she placed a wreath at the funeral service in support of a crewmember whose last name was **Lumpkins**, the Hunley’s quartermaster.

“These men’s mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and other loved ones have, of course, long since passed away,” Pate observed.

“So in my own way, I felt I was stepping in for them.” ■

—**RON HALL**

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<b>Ron Hall</b>	Editor
<b>Arabella Juarez</b>	Visual Project Manager
<b>Mary Adams</b>	Printing and Distribution Coordinator
<b>Charles Hobbs</b>	<b>USDA News</b> Internet Coordinator
<b>Gayle Turner</b>	<b>USDA News</b> Internet Assistant

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#### **Life Insurance...continued from pg. 1**

Enrollment Packet” and prepared by OPM—which further describe this particular FEGLI open season. Employees can also access that material electronically via OPM’s website at [www.opm.gov/insure/life](http://www.opm.gov/insure/life)

Phillips advised that any new life insurance coverage elected during this open enrollment period will not become effective until September 2005.

She added that, in order for an

employee to carry any newly-elected FEGLI coverage into retirement, it must be in effect for the five years of service that immediately precede that employee’s retirement date.

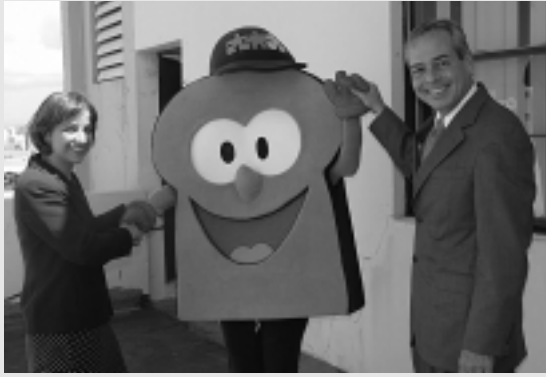
Phillips noted that, unlike the last FEGLI open season in 1999—which had been prompted by the Federal Employees Life Insurance Improvement Act, signed into law in October 1998—there are *no* changes in the FEGLI Program that are prompting this particular open

season.

“Nonetheless,” she emphasized, “we encourage employees to take advantage of this opportunity to review their life insurance needs.”

“There’s no telling when this opportunity will happen again.” ■





*"OK, now everybody look at the camera and smile. That's good. **Jaime Rivera**, please raise **PANECO's** left hand and smile. **Aracelis Lopez**, please shake **PANECO's** right hand and smile. **PANECO**, please smile too. And, **PANECO**, please don't drop any bread crumbs, OK?" Note **Kim Jabat's** story—without any bread crumbs—on page 4.—**PHOTO BY LYMARIE VELEZ***



## Help Us Find Daniel Ted Yuen

Missing: 2-8-2004

D.O.B. 7-20-1987

Hair: Black

Height: 5 ft. 6 in.

From: Running Springs, CA

Sex: Male

Eyes: Brown

Weight: 125 lbs.

*If you have information, please call*

**1-800-843-5678**

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

## USDA-Sponsored Calendar Highlights

### ■ September 6-10

*National Minority Enterprise  
Development Week*

Washington, DC

(202) 720-6259 or 1-800-877-8339 (TTY)

### ■ Month of September

*National Preparedness Month*

USDA headquarters and field offices

(202) 720-8846 or 1-800-877-8339 (TTY)

### ■ Month of September

*National Food Safety Education Month*

USDA headquarters and field offices

1-888-674-6854 or 1-800-256-7072 (TTY)

### ■ September 15-October 15

*Hispanic Heritage Month*

USDA headquarters and field offices

(202) 720-7314 or (202) 720-6382 (TTY)

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